Temperance – 1929

NEWS & COURIER
CHARLESTON, S. C.

JUN 18 1929

What Cares "Uncle Sam"?

Representative Florence Kahn, Republican and wet, of California, has introduced a bill providing that $25,000 be paid the dependents of persons killed wantonly by federal dry officers.

In South Carolina no persons have been killed wantonly by federal dry officers. Nevertheless, the case of Johnson, negro, may interest Mrs. Kahn, and briefly the facts are repeated for her information.

Last September or October three miles from the village of Pinewood, in Sumter county, this state, three federal officers and a fourth person who was not an officer of any kind raided a still on a Saturday afternoon. The raid was accompanied, admittedly, by the discharge of firearms. Three or four negroes were arrested and imprisoned.

The following morning, about eighteen hours after the raid, the children of Johnson found his dead body with a bullet hole in his back about fifty yards (or feet) from the site of the still. The coroner of Sumter county attempted to hold an inquest, but more than three weeks elapsed before he succeeded in obtaining the consent of the federal officers to attend and testify. These officers were present at the inquest and accompanied by a federal attorney. The officers left the scene before the verdict was returned.

The coroner's jury pointed to the raiding party as responsible for Johnson's death. The case was transferred to the federal district court, the state solicitor prosecuted, and the four accused were acquitted upon a directed verdict. The state authorities since that time have apparently made no effort to discover the slayer or slayers of Johnson, probably they believe they have done their full duty. Their prosecution was a failure.

Nor have federal authorities, so far as we are informed, investigated the cause of the man's death. They cleared the federal officers.

The dead body of a man (a negro man) with a bullet in his back was found within a stone's throw of the scene of a raid by federal officers accompanied by shooting—and the government of the United States of America has left it there.

The State of South Carolina at least made an effort to ascertain the cause of the death of this negro.

What does the United States of America care about the dead body of a negro?

Temperance—1929

UNION
Norwich N.Y.
JAN 17 1929

Apparently the W. C. T. U. authorities have at last recognized the weakness in the prohibition situation and without formally acknowledging the errors of the more recent past, are going back to first principles. They propose to take the "force" out of enforcement and substitute education. In other words they tacitly recognize what has been repeatedly urged in these columns, namely, that the force of public sentiment is the only force that can make prohibition enforcement effective. They recognize, also, that public sentiment is a matter of education and not of law; and they propose to take up again the trail which they very largely abandoned ten years ago, when the eighteenth amendment became effective. The history of temperance and prohibition in this country warrants their present plan. Older readers will recall the temperance lecturers and workers of fifty or sixty years ago. Their chief stock in trade was the denunciation of the liquor dealer. Under this plan of campaigning the cause of temperance had its ups and downs, the downs following very closely on the ups, and the third condition, many times, being worse than the first. Up to this time the temperance issue was a moral issue. The southern states pointed the way. Economics was the basis of the southern campaign; and sociology entered into it very largely. Sober, the southern negro was industrious and civil; drunk, he was worthless as a laborer and dangerous as a citizen. To keep liquor away from the negro was the object sought by the prohibition movement in the south. It succeeded in large measure in that respect, but it did not interfere and never was intended to interfere with the right of whites to have liquor. Something like twenty-five years ago, fifteen years before the prohibition amendment was adopted, economics and sociology became the basis for temperance and prohibition campaigns in the north and west; and the growth of supporting sentiment was rapid. We believe that the nation was on the way to voluntary prohibition, or at least to a public sentiment which frowned on the open saloon and would support any reasonable legislation to suppress it. That sentiment became representative of the majority and the leaders of that sentiment—disregarding the lessons of history all over the world—succeeded in incorporating that majority sentiment into law. It was the old story of resorting to the whip to reach more quickly an end which was being approached by other means. Everybody knows the result. If we had stopped to think, we might have foreseen it. The editor of the Union confesses to have been one of those who did not stop to think and who had confidence in the efficiency of the prohibition amendment. The illusion was quite soon dispelled and for five or more years, we have been pleading for a return to the educational methods which met with remarkable success during the first fifteen years of the twentieth century. We congratulate the W. C. T. U. that its efforts during 1929 are to be in that direction. They will seek to "sell prohibition" to the people. Whether the final result shall be prohibition or temperance cannot, we think, be determined at this time, but at least the move is in the right direction to remove the present unfortunate conditions.

Prohibition And The Negro

So far, the Jones' law has done nothing more than raise the price of bootleg liquor. But it has not made the cost prohibitive to the average man, and if he wants it he can still get it at the same old places, even though he grumbles at the additional price he has to pay for each pint. Should the price be raised a thousandfold there will still be purchasers of whiskey, even if a robbery or hold up must be resorted to in order to get the money.

We have not in the past had any paticular quarrel with prohibition, realizing that those who really wanted intoxicants could get them with comparative ease, and those few who absolutely refused to take a drink would continue to do without.

The peculiarities of the Volstead law have been salvation for many Negroes in northern cities. Migrants from Dixie, finding prices for life's necessities almost fabulous in comparison to what they paid in the south, have resorted to satisfying the nation's thirst in order to keep body and soul together. Prohibition has aided the city Negro economically, but not in the way the reformers anticipated, if you get what we mean. Bootlegging has been the means of many a Negro purchasing a six flat building and making other legal investments.

We have noticed the Michigan habitual criminal act in operation and have seen that possession or sale of a pint of liquor under its provisions has no more severe penalty than the most repulsive murder in that state, life imprisonment being the punishment meted out in both cases. At present, William Edwards, an Adrian, Mich., Aframerican, faces life in jail because of the sale of a quart of whiskey. All thus far convicted have been poor people, and we believe the Jones' law will merely imprison the poor Caucasian and the Negro.

Kelly Miller of Howard university says that if the Negroes openly violate the Volstead act, it will leave room for a logical violation of Amendments Thirteen, Fourteen and Fifteen to the Constitution, Caucasians claiming that if Aframericans have no respect for one amendment, why should they, the whites, respect three others? The soundest argument against such a statement is facts. The Constitution has been held in greater disrepute since Prohibition became nation-wide than ever before in the history of the country—and at the same time lynchings decreased greatly with segregation and disfranchisement taking a downward trend. This has happened with the knowledge that many Negroes were violating constantly the Volstead Act.

There are others who say that the Negro should not be bootleggers merely because it is illegal. We agree with them perfectly, but it so happens that many are forced to engage in the liquor traffic to keep body and soul together. If there were enough jobs in white business for Negro workers or in Afrmaerican enterprises for the black laborer, it would be a different proposition. We would rather see jobless Negroes eke out an existence by selling "moon" whiskey than by engaging in thievery and holdups.

Prohibition has done little more than finance gangs of expert criminals and make us a nation of hypocrites. We enjoy telling the rest of the world that we will have nothing to do with liquor, then rush to the closest speakeasy and plank down two fifty cent white mule. Convictions under the Jones'

courage bootlegging instead of stopping it, because as prices rise many will take the risk to make a fortune overnight, and the murderous gangs of Chicago, St. Louis, Detroit, New York, and other places, will merely be more desperate and have more money with which to lure clever men to their ranks. Sufferers will be the small white bootlegger and the Negro whiskey merchant, and the latter is at present playing an important part in the economical advancement of the Aframericans.

TIMES
INDIANAPOLIS, IND.
MAR 7 1929

THE fifteenth amendment of the United States Constitution: "1: The right of the citizens of the United States to vote shall not be denied or abridged by the United States or by any state on account of race, color, or previous condition of servitude.

"2: The congress shall have power to enforce the provision of this article by appropriate legislation."

It is interesting, and perhaps a little ironic, to note that the first citizen to be tried under the Jones bill is a Negro. A Negro must face the possibility of five years in jail because he is accused of violating the eighteenth amendment.

If convicted, the court will endeavor to show him that the Constitution of the United States means precisely what it says and must be enforced.

And yet, even if he does serve five years in jail, ruminating all the while, I wonder if he will not have the right when he gets out to remain a trifle puzzled.

And I wonder if President Hoover had each and every constitutional provision in mind when he said in his inaugural address: "Our whole system of self-government will crumble either if officials elect what laws they will enforce or citizens elect what laws they will support."

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THE JONES BILL

CONGRESS has passed a bill making infractions of Volstead Act punishable at the maximum with a fine of $10,000 and imprisonment for five years. This frantic effort to enforce the unenforcable has drawn down upon our government the derision of the civilized world. If there is one thing that the history of nations teaches, is it that whenever government cease to do justice, which is thei ronly legitimate function, and seek to regulate the morals and manners of its subjects and citizens, it is on the downroad road to ruin.

This is the richest country on earth and yet it finds itself, not promoting the happiness and welfare of its people, but organizing a predatory army of crooks and near crooks to harass and render miserable its citizens.

After the Armistice, when our boys came home from overseas, the government felt itself two poor to give them financial relief and to some way lighten their burdens that had accumulated upon them while defending her honor abroad—so they were given adjustment service certificates that mature when most of them shall be in their graves from the wounds and exposures of war. At the same time ,the government, instead of caring for its defenders, finds itself rich enough to spend millions to uphold one law that should never have been enacted. Blackstone, who knew more about law and human nature than al lthe Volsteads and his army of fanatics, assures us that "Any law contrary to human nature cannot be enforced."

President Hoover has vainly appealed to an enlightened public conscience to awaken a sentiment in facor of law. No great number can ever respond to that appeal because, deep down in the heart of everyone is the firm conviction that the prohibition law is based upon a lie and should not endure. It is hard to convince anyone that he has committed a great crime, that demands exposure to the scorn of mankind when he drinks a glass of beer. It may be that the Jones Bill will do more to nullify the 18th Amendment than any other agency. Laws can be made too drastic and Draconian. Years ago, England had a law making it a felony punishable with death to steal a sheep. No jury would ever quench the fire in a man's breast for the theft of a sheep, and the law had to be repealed.

The Kentucky Legislature passed a law giving the death penalty to anyone convicted of burglary. That savage law still soils our statutes; yet not one person has ever been executed under it, because juries will not convict under a law that subverts justice. Such is the most probable fate of the Jones Bill. Oliver Goldsmith in England said what is true today in America: "The laws control the poor man, and the rich man controls the law." Nobody expects any rich bootlegger, rum runner or manufacturer to serve a long prison term. When caught ,he will "See" the prohibition officer and the officer will not see him. Woe unto the poor devil that falls into the claws of their clutches.

Let our President get his surveying commission to function as soon as possible and may they be men of sense and judgment and not either fanatics or hypocrites. No great nation in the world will ever adopt such a law. It has been rejected in nearly every country in Europe and in Australia and Canada. Every one points to the United States as a horrible example.

TIMES-JOURNAL
SELMA, ALA.
FEB 27 1929

Negro Home-Brewers

A melancholy feature of the proceedings of every criminal court is the large number of negroes who are arraigned for violating the prohibition laws some for running stills and some for vending the stuff. The law gives the trial judge no discretion in sentencing those who "possess" or operate stills for which the minimum sentence is a year and a day in the pen. Negroes uniformly who are indicted for these offenses plead "guilty". They do not employ attorneys or seek to circumvent the law but step up and take their medicine. Frequently negroes who embark in the business of making corn liquor or doing any other kind of home distilling are influenced by some white man with whom they share the profits and take most of the hazards of the business. The partnership is never brought out in the trial. After the negro is convicted the white man often enters into collusion with some other unsuspecting colored brother and the traffic starts up at a new place. V. P. L. cases are multiplying rapidly on all of our court dockets and a certain element of negroes provide most of the "grist" that goes through these mills.

STAR
WASHINGTON, D. C.
APR 8 - 1929

COLORED MEETINGS FOR DRY LAW BEGINS

Clinton N. Howard Speaks in Interest of Unifying Race Here in Support of Amendment.

The first of a series of mass meetings seeking to unify the colored population of Washington in its support of the eighteenth amendment was held yesterday afternoon in the Nineteenth Street Baptist Church under auspices of the National United Committee for Law Enforcement. Clinton N. Howard, chairman of the committee, spoke at this and two similar meetings in other churches. The series will extend over a period of four weeks.

Those present at the meetings, sponsored by 100 colored pastors, adopted a resolution pledging their support to President Hoover's enforcement program.

In urging colored people to support the eighteenth amendment, Mr. Howard told them that race rights can never be obtained by denouncing the white man for violating one part of the Constitution and themselves violating another.

SENTINEL
Waterville Me
JUN 1 1929

Asking Too Much Of Canada

Canada certainly is manifesting commendable patience and friendliness over our prohibition problems. This country has no right of law or friendship to ask her to make any sacrifices to help us enforce our own laws. The United States furnishes a wonderful market for her liquors and undoubtedly she is getting a handsome profit, but that is strictly her business and not ours. Our job is to take care of the liquor after it crosses the line and not to attempt to dictate to Canada what she shall do before it does cross. Begging her to help is a cry baby attitude and thoroughly inconsistent.

It should not be forgotten that some of the now most respected New England fortunes were started by ships that sailed away loaded with rum and came back with niggers. The rum debauched natives, if not against their will at least against their knowledge of its potency, and was far more a violation of their rights than shipping Canadian liquor across our borders. Then, too, we had a hand in forcing drugs on China and other oriental countries and our trade on Japan. When the profit has been on our side we have never hesitated to take any advantage of a commercial opportunity regardless of the rights of others. We have fought, too, to prevent protection of other nationals that would reduce these profits.

So now if we are being debauched by Canadian rum and if we need the protection against alien traders we so long refused others, it is only some of our own chickens coming home to roost. Certainly we can't expect all the world to further our pursuit of our own pet hobby, prohibition, regardless of their own interests or opinions. This must be an entirely domestic problem with us and never can be made an international issue. We should not press friendship with either England or Canada any more than we have already in this respect.

It's our job to keep Canadian rum out of here if we do not wish it sold and their right to ship it in so long